

Peter T. Kirstein

Peter Thomas Kirstein CBE FREng DFBCS (June 20, 1933 – January 8, 2020)^[1] was a British computer scientist who played a role in the creation of the Internet. He put the first computer on the ARPANET outside of the US and was instrumental in defining and implementing TCP/IP alongside Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn. He is "often recognized as the father of the European Internet".^[2]

Professor Peter Kirstein CBE, FREng, DFBCS	
Born	June 20, 1933
Died	January 8, 2020
Education	Highgate School Cambridge University Stanford University
Website	http://www.cs.ucl.ac.uk/staff/P.Kirstein/

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Biography

Born in Germany but brought up in England, he was educated at Highgate School in North London,^[3] received a B.A. from Cambridge University in 1954, an MSc and PhD in electrical engineering from Stanford University (in 1955 and 1957, respectively) and a D.Sc. in engineering from the University of London in 1970.

He was a member of the staff at CERN from 1959 to 1963. He did research for General Electric at Zurich from 1963 to 1967. He was a professor at the University of London from 1970 to 1973. After that, he joined the faculty at the University College London, serving as head of the computer science department from 1980 to 1994.

Kirstein's research group at University College London was one of the first international connections on the ARPANET in 1973, alongside Norwegian Seismic Array (NORSAR) and Sweden's Tanum Earth Station.^[4] This later grew into the trans-Atlantic SATNET. Early in the development of the Internet, he co-authored (with Vint Cerf) one of the most significant early technical papers on the internetworking concept.^[5]

His research group at UCL adopted TCP/IP in 1982, a year ahead of ARPANET, and played a significant role in the very earliest experimental Internet work.^{[6][7][8]}

He was awarded the CBE for his work on the Internet. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, a Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, an Honorary Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a Distinguished Fellow of the British Computer Society. He has also received the SIGCOMM Award in 1999, and the Postel Award in 2003, as well as various other award for his contributions to the development of the Internet internationally.

In 2012, Kirstein was inducted into the Internet Hall of Fame by the Internet Society.^[9] In 2015, he was awarded the prestigious Marconi Prize.^[2]

Peter Kirstein passed away on the morning of 8th January 2020 while in his home. Peter was the founder of the Computer Science Department at UCL. Prof. Steve Hailes, current Head of Department, wrote about him: "Peter was very widely recognised as a pioneer of the Internet and has many honours to his name – he was one of the original inductees into the Internet Hall of Fame, and a recipient of both the SIGCOMM award and Marconi Prize; he was a distinguished fellow of the BCS and a fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering; and he was awarded a CBE for his achievements. Much of this was undoubtedly down to an incredibly logical mind, coupled with a level of interest, vision and determination that saw him retire only late last year at the age of 86. [...] Peter was also deeply empathetic and sensitive: he was both gentleman and a gentle man, he was a source of encouragement and sage advice, he was persuasive, open-minded, fair and never afraid to learn something new or to admit that he didn't know."

See also

- Internet in the United Kingdom § History
- Internet pioneers
- Sylvia Wilbur, a computer scientist who worked for Kirstein in his early ARPANET research

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External links

- Home page (<http://www.cs.ucl.ac.uk/staff/P.Kirstein/>)
 - Kirstein recognized with Postel Award (<https://web.archive.org/web/20050906215856/http://www.isoc.org/isoc/media/releases/030716pr.shtml>)
 - Awarded BCS's distinguished fellowship (<http://www.computerweekly.com/Articles/2005/01/14/207786/Unsunginternetpioneerawardedsocietysdistinguishedfellowship.htm>)
 - Peter T. Kirstein (<https://www.genealogy.math.ndsu.nodak.edu/id.php?id=169290>) at the Mathematics Genealogy Project
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